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AUTHOR Matter, Gloria M.
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ABSTRACT

Successful integration of hearing impaired students on the secondary level requires that the resource teacher provide supportive help to the students and the classroom teacher. Functions of the resource teacher include acting as an academic tutor to students already equipped with basic academic skills, pre-teaching courses to students lacking basic skills, and helping classroom teachers to adjust their teaching methods for the benefit of the hearing impaired student. (LS)

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Gloria M. Matter
Resource Teacher
Shorewood High School
Shorewood, Wisconsin

# MAINSTREAMING THE HEARING IMPAIRED CHILD: CRITICAL VARIABLES OR INTEGRATION . . . . . FOR WHOM?

The concept of mainstreaming should be a philosophy of the school district. Then, administrators, regular staff members, students, resource teachers and parents can be expected to work together and the program for hearing impaired students will be a segment of the general education program provided for all students. This means that the hearing impaired students will have the same opportunities in academic classes as well as in co-curriculars. As a resource teacher, I know that students with severe and profound hearing losses can be successfully mainstreamed in a high school curriculum. The majority of our students have continued in the mainstream at colleges and universities for hearing students and the remainder have met success in the working world.

In mainstreaming hearing impaired students, it is important that the students and the classroom teachers experience success which is made possible by providing supportive help. A teacher of the hearing impaired then becomes a resource teacher to the hearing impaired students as well as to the classroom teachers, counselors and administrators. As a full time member of the faculty, I am available to teachers and students when needed. I have the opportunity to serve on curriculum committees which allows me to have some input in the formulating of new courses and to help in the selection of new text books and other materials. It is possible to have greater impact on the staff and on hearing impaired students as a full-time staff member and co-worker. It is possible to have an on-going in-service program through informal encounters in the lunchroom and the hallways.

If hearing impaired students are to be successful in the mainstream, their academic preparedness becomes a critical variable. Some students with severe to profound hearing losses are equipped with the basic academic skills; reading, language and mathematics for their grade level when they enter the secondary school. They are able to communicate with others and to express themselves in written language. They are not necessarily at the top of their class receiving the highest grades but they are not and should not be the failing student either.

Their motivation, their independence, their adaptability, their social and emotional maturity and the use they make of their residual hearing all contribute greatly to their success. For these able students, the resource teacher becomes an academic tutor, advocate and counselor.

However, some hearing impaired students may be lacking many of the basic concepts and skills. Because these students cannot function in the regular academic classes, it is important to individualize a program for them so that eventually they may participate in a work-study program or receive on-the-job training. This means providing reading and language instruction at their level in the resource room and mainstream them in courses in which they can succeed. If that includes industrial arts or home economics, then these students are taught the vocabulary specific to those courses in the resource room.

For industrial arts classes they need to know a phillips screw from a flat head screw from a round head screw. They need to be taught the names and uses of the various machines and tools. They must learn the characteristics of thermoplastic and thermosetting plastics.

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In a Foods I class they will learn about the basic food groups, the nutrients, the various ways of preparing meats and, therefore, words like saute', braise, roast and broil are taught.

In clothing classes they need the vocabulary of the parts of the sewing machine, the kinds of fibers and fabric construction. By working cooperatively with the classroom teacher this is learned or reinforced in the resource room.

For students who are lacking background knowledge or basic skills, it is often necessary to pre-teach a course. For example, before a student is enrolled in a Driver Education class, he must be familiar with such terminology as: vehicular traffic, residential district, liability and right of way. He must know some of the traffic laws, the basic parts of a car and the function of insurance. If this is taught in the resource room the students will hopefully begin the class with a knowledge equal to many of his hearing peers.

Critical variables include the students academic strengths and weaknessses and the need to select appropriate courses. It is necessary to provide the instruction that is needed for these students to maintain success.

For the less able students, the resource teacher must select courses in which these students can achieve, must provide tutorial assistance, must prepare the students by pre-teaching in some areas to make mainstreaming in these classes possible at a later date and must work with the students to improve their basic skills.

The courses into which a student is mainstreamed should be evaluated in terms of the course objectives and the concepts that are to be developed. Does the student have a foundation upon which he can build? A student taking American Diplomatic History cannot understand American's foreign policy unless he has some knowledge of American history.

The classroom teacher and the particular method of teaching of that individual can mean success or failure in the mainstream for the hearing impaired student. Personal characteristics such as a positive attitude toward the hearing impaired student, a basic understanding of the impact of deafness on learning, clear speech and flexibility are also important. A teacher who lectures daily for 50 minutes and walks around the room while doing so, places the hearing impaired student in a difficult if not an impossible situation. Therefore, the courses and the classroom teacher's method of teaching become critical variables.

Success in academic areas is, of course, the first priority. Another critical variable is the students ability to function in a socially acceptable manner in order to have satisfying relationships with their peers, hearing or deaf. The degree in which hearing impaired students are accepted socially depends upon the kind of people they are and NOT on the degree of their hearing loss. The hearing impaired adolescent must be able to chit chat, to ask for a date, to accept or refuse graciously, to express appreciation, to understand the subtleties of our language, to ask and not demand. Much of this can be experienced in the resource room through what I call incidental teaching. There are endless daily incidents that can be used to help students to understand themselves and to relate to others.

Therefore, at the secondary level, a full-time teacher of the hearing impaired who knows the students, the staff and the courses, must be available to provide a support system. The students need academic, social and emotional support. They need

reinforcement of what has been presented in their classes. Classroom teachers need to know how to adjust their teaching methods for the benefit of the hearing impaired student. They need to have someone to whom they can go with their questions and problems about how to help the hearing impaired students achieve in their classroom.

Hearing impaired students will be in the mainstream eventually and with a variety of positive experiences and supportive help during their school years; they will be better able to cope with the realities of life.